

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A piston cylinder unit comprising:
 - a closed cylinder having an end wall;
 - a piston rod guided through said end wall;
 - a piston fixed to said piston rod for axial displacement in said cylinder, said piston dividing said cylinder into a working space surrounding the piston rod and a working space away from the piston rod;
 - an annular seal between said piston and said cylinder;
 - a volume equalizing space in said piston;
 - a first valve which can be opened under pressure to admit fluid from said working space away from said piston rod to said volume equalizing space[[,]];
 - a second valve which can be opened under pressure to admit fluid from said working space surrounding said piston rod to said volume equalizing space[[,]];
 - at least one of said first and second valves comprising:
 - a valve chamber in said piston and having a mouth opening into a respective one of said working spaces[[,]];
 - a valve piston sealingly and displaceably mounted within said valve chamber and biased towards said mouth by a closing force[[,]]; and
 - a closing element coupled to said valve piston and extending between said valve piston and said mouth, said closing element being configured to close said mouth and displaceable with said valve piston from said mouth when pressure in said respective working space exceeds said closing force,

wherein said at least one of said first and second valves is configured as a non-return valve providing flow communication between said respective working space and said volume equalizing space upon opening said mouth;

a first non-return valve which can admit fluid from said volume equalizing space to said working space away from said piston rod; and

a second non-return valve which can admit fluid from said volume equalizing space to said working space surrounding said piston rod.

2. (previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 1, wherein said volume equalizing chamber has a fluid capacity which increases under pressure loading and decreases under pressure relief.

3. (previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 2, further comprising a volume-equalizing element in said volume-equalizing chamber, said element having a volume which decreases under pressure loading and increases under pressure relief.

4. (previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 3, wherein said volume equalizing element has an elastomeric wall enclosing a space filled with a gas.

5. (canceled)

6. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 1, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure comprises a helical compression spring or a cup-type compression spring.

7. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 1, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure is a seat valve.

8. (previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 1, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure is a slide valve.

9. (canceled)

10. (previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 1, wherein said closing force is produced by a spring.

11. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 10, wherein said spring comprises one or more spring arms supported on the piston and applying a force which is degressive so that said closing element is subject to less force in a closing direction as said closing element moves in an opening direction.

12. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 1, wherein one of said closing element and said valve piston of said at least one of said first and second valves is loaded in the closing direction by magnetic forces.

13. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 12, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure comprises a permanent magnet on one of said valve piston and said piston and a ferromagnetic component on the other of said valve piston and said piston.

14. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 1, wherein said at least one of said first and second valves which can be opened under pressure is retained in an open position by a retaining force which is smaller than said closing force, said retaining force added to said pressure being larger than said closing force.

15. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 14, further comprising a latching element on one of said valve piston and said piston, and a latch on the other of said valve piston and said piston, said latching element and said latch providing said retaining force.

16. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 14, further comprising a snap spring arranged on the valve piston, said snap spring having a snap arm which is contact with said piston without any substantial axial force in the closed position, and cooperates with said piston to provide said retaining force in the open position.

17. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 1, further comprising at least one permanent magnet arranged on said valve piston and at least one permanent magnet arranged on said piston, said permanent magnets being arranged to provide said closing force when said valve piston is in a closed position and said retaining force when said valve piston is in an open position.

18. (previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 1, wherein said annular seal is designed to form said first and second non-return valves.

19. (previously presented) The piston cylinder unit of claim 18, wherein said annular seal comprises two axially spaced annular sealing lips which bear against said cylinder and form a space therebetween, said piston comprising a connecting line which connects said volume equalizing space to said space between said annular sealing lips.

20. (withdrawn, previously presented) The piston-cylinder unit of claim 18, wherein said annular seal comprises two axially spaced valve flaps separated by a sealing ring which bears elastically against said cylinder, said piston comprising a connecting line which opens radially on said piston and leads to the volume-equalizing chamber, said valve flaps closing said connecting line.